



## THE WAYS OF MONITORING STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

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**Annotation:** *This article gives information about how to monitor students while they are on task and also you can know when, how and what purpose you may monitor your students.*

**Key words:** *monitoring, management, activities*

Monitoring is a classroom management technique loosely defined as listening to the learners for their accuracy and fluency, or checking to see whether activities are going to plan and that the learners are 'on task'. However, monitoring is often carried out as a vague listening and looking exercise by the teacher, and sometimes not done at all, whereas in fact effective monitoring is a skill that needs to be developed if learners are to benefit fully from activities, particularly those of the information gap and group interactive types. Monitoring goes on all the time, but particularly during speaking activities when the teacher is concerned with the general assessment of learners' performance in relation to general progress or recent language and skills development.

Not all learners develop at the same rate. Monitoring offers the opportunity to assess the progress of individuals, and often provides an indication of what to re-teach or practise further. Specific aims of monitoring, depending on the stage of the lesson and the activity, include:

- Being aware of the whole class. The teacher should always be aware of how the class is getting on, whether the pace is too fast or too slow, and which students may need individual attention. There is often a tendency to teach to the lesson plan and materials at the expense of teaching the learners themselves.

- Listening for errors in the target language, particularly during guided practice activities. Correction is required here, since these are usually accuracy-based activities.

- Listening to ensure that learners are on task. Some re-instruction, modelling of the activity or prompting may be required.

- Taking opportunities for micro-teaching to individuals or pairs who have clearly not grasped the target language.

- Assessing both individuals and the whole class. Monitoring provides clues to individual and group difficulties and progress. In this respect, monitoring is a kind of ongoing needs analysis. All students should receive some attention, even if it is only a few words of encouragement.



- Adding input. Particularly in fluency activities, learners may not be able to sustain output. The teacher's role here is to feed in language and ideas when appropriate to keep the activity alive.

- Assessing the development of fluency. This involves monitoring from a distance, and the teacher's role is often to take notes about common errors to be dealt with in a delayed correction slot, as well as mentally noting the use of target language in a freer context.

- Assessing the task. Some activities work better with one class than another, others are being tried out for the first time. Monitoring offers the teacher the opportunity to assess the success of an activity and to get feedback from the learners.

- Planning. Monitoring facilitates decision-making in terms of what to do next, whether to modify the original lesson plan, planning future lessons and giving feedback to students on their performance.

- Maintaining discipline. Large groups may become restless and bored if some learners have finished a task before others. The teacher should have some short back-up activities for these learners, or could use the quicker learners as assistants to help slower groups.

Close monitoring needs to be carried out sensitively, and an element of personal and cultural awareness is required. Some learners resent a very close physical presence, others object to the teacher crouching in front of them. Monitoring from in front of the learners is distracting and sometimes intrusive, tending to interrupt the activity and shifting the focus onto the teacher. Students then expect the teacher to provide some input, make a comment, or correct them. Unobtrusive monitoring is most effective, and is often best done from behind the learners. Some useful tips are:

- Move chairs away from walls.
- Make sure that there is a clear route around the classroom.
- Arrange seating so that all students are visible from wherever the teacher is positioned.

- Monitor pairs or groups randomly.
- Don't spend too much time with one individual, pair or group, and make sure that all learners are monitored.

- Rather than standing or crouching, sit with pairs or groups. A chair with wheels is an ideal vehicle for moving from group to group.

Monitoring from a distance is done from any position in the classroom which offers the possibility of 'tuning in' on different conversations. In larger classes, the teacher may need to move around the room. It is important not to sit near one group for the whole activity, suggesting that the teacher is listening only to them. Often, the best position is behind the learners, out of their field of vision, so that they are focused on the task and each other rather than the teacher.

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